

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WSDOT poised to charge penalties to bridge contractor

The Washington State Department of Transportation is poised to charge daily penalties to the prime contractor on the State Route 290/Trent Avenue bridge replacement project. The penalties, known in the contract as “liquidated damages,” will amount to \$2,988 per day. The penalty will be assessed beginning on December 17, 2003, the day following the expiration of allowed working days in the contract and the latest date that the bridge was required to be open to traffic and all work completed. This amount will be withheld from the final payment to the contractor.

Ross Bros. & Company of Salem, Oregon is the prime contractor on the project. Their construction bid was \$8,963,410.

“We take the schedule very seriously,” said Jerry Lenzi, WSDOT Regional Administrator. “The contractor was not even able to maintain the construction pace of the schedules that he submitted and the Department agreed to.”

The State Route 290/Trent Avenue bridge project will not open in mid-December as previously announced. Critical items that are required to be completed before traffic can safely use the new structure will not be finished until late this month. “We made a promise to the people of this community that the job would be finished by the fall of this year and they have been very patient. The roadway was completely closed for the last two years to facilitate more cost-efficient construction. It’s now time for the work to be done and the road to be opened,” said Lenzi.

A specific opening date is not yet known as the cold weather, along with snow or rain, can have an affect on what work can be accomplished.

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The WSDOT was optimistic that the contractor would finish the work fairly close to the original projection of fall 2003 set two years ago, however during the course of construction, the contractor did not mobilize the proper equipment and have sufficient workers on site to keep their own schedule.

Although there have been some unanticipated challenges during the work, in May of 2003, the State and Ross Bros. negotiated an agreement that included mutually agreed upon compensation and added working days that called for the work to be completed by mid-December. The contractor submitted, and the Department approved, a schedule that committed to a completion date of December 12, 2003. In late November, it became apparent that the contractor was not going to be able to meet their mid December time frame. The contractor then submitted a working schedule with an opening date of December 29, 2003. Although it is beyond the agreed upon schedule, the Department is hopeful that the work will be finished and the roadway open to traffic in that time frame.

Items that remain to be completed before the new structure can be opened to traffic include: the pouring and curing of a concrete bridge approach slab, temporary lane markings, sidewalks, pedestrian rail, and traffic barrier ends. Temporary lane striping will be put in place until warmer weather arrives. After construction equipment is removed, the bridge deck also needs to be inspected to ensure that it meets specifications. There may be some small areas that may require grinding for smoothness.

Even though some of the roadway items don't meet specifications, and the roadway "ride" is not as smooth as desired, the Department will most likely open the roadway and require the contractor to address these final items in the spring.

Additional work that needs to be finished, but is not critical to traffic operations are pigmented sealer, landscaping work, the illumination system, and other minor items.

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All state highway construction is performed by private contractors, and the Department's role is to make sure that the work is performed to specifications and within the time allotted. The goal of the Washington State Department of Transportation is to ensure that the citizens of the state receive a top quality product for their tax dollars and that the impact of the construction is minimized as much as possible.

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